

IHSS Research Seminar Program 2022

**“Decadence’s Spatiotemporal Technologies:
Thomas Hardy and Australian Time”**

Professor Paul Giles

Chair: Dr Kristie Flannery

Tuesday 6 September 2022, 12-1pm AEST

To be held in room 460.3.01 and online via Teams

Abstract: Though the aesthetics of Decadence of the 1880s and 1890s have often been associated with an inward-looking dynamic, they were also shaped in oblique ways by wider developments in technology that opened up new horizons in space and time. Thomas Hardy was knowledgeable about new sciences such as astronomy, geology and photography, and his novels self-consciously internalize disjunctions in scale, contrasting enclosed and insulated landscapes with vaster spatiotemporal vistas. Australia became a significant discursive site within which Hardy projected these ideas, and he was particularly interested in the work of Australian fiction writers Catherine Martin and “Tasma” (Jesse Couvreur). Because of the unfortunate way in which literary history became institutionalized, particularly after political Federation in 1901, Hardy’s intellectual engagement with Australian culture has been neglected both by advocates of English Literature and Australian Literature, whose agendas have more often been specifically nationalist in their orientation. However, the character of Little Father Time in *Jude the Obscure* is said specifically to have been born in Sydney, and this paper will consider ways in which Hardy’s fiction engages with conceptions of time linked to Australia, and with planetary orbits in general, so as to expand the circumference of his art.

Bio: Paul Giles is Professor of English in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. He is the author of eleven monographs and numerous essays on English, American and Australian literature and culture. Published books include *American Catholic Arts and Fictions: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics* (Cambridge UP, 1992), *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Duke UP, 2002), *Atlantic Republic: The American Tradition in English Literature* (Oxford UP, 2006), *Antipodean America: Australasia and the Constitution of US Literature* (Oxford UP, 2013), and *The Planetary Clock: Antipodean Time and Spherical Postmodern Fictions* (Oxford UP, 2021). He is currently completing a trilogy of books on representations of time in Western culture.

